

## **The Appeal of Ethical Relativism**

Rev. Richard C. Eyer, D.Min.  
Concordia University Wisconsin

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Ethical relativism is presented as attractive because:

1. It is usually presented as a choice only between ethical absolutism on the one hand or ethical relativism on the other, but there are alternatives between the extremes of absolutism and relativism such as moral objectivism which says that "there are valid rules that one should generally adhere to but that, in cases of moral conflict, may be overridable by another moral principle."
2. It is assumed that agreement on morality means agreement on transcendent moral truths, but we can agree on moral truths without claiming agreement on their transcendence.
3. It is assumed that if cultures differ in morality, who is to say who is right and who is wrong, but our judgments against the morality of another culture does not mean we have to throw out the idea of morality altogether.
4. It is assumed that if there is no God then there is no morality, and yet, theists and atheists can still agree on necessary moral principles to live by.
5. It is assumed that morality has no goal (no reason to exist), but the goal of ethics historically has always been about how to promote human flourishing.

These replies to someone who rejects the idea of morality are responses based on reason rather than revelation. But sometimes a discussion with someone who does not share the faith can continue on the basis of what Luther called "civil righteousness." Give it a try.